Rapunzel, Benjamin Button and Little Red Riding Hood in this and any other possible world: Philosophical, rhetorical and textual semiotic excursions in inter-textual formations amongst advertising, literary and filmic texts

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Bio

George Rossolatos is an academic researcher and marketing practitioner, with experience in advertising (JWT), marketing research (Research International/Millward Brown) and brand management (Colgate-Palmolive, Nestle, Weetabix, Cosmote). He holds a BA(Hons) in Philosophy from the University of Essex, an MSc in Marketing from Manchester Business School, during which he coined the model of Consumer Psychoanalysis and an MBA from Strathclyde Business School, including research in the field of brand equity. He also conducted part-time PhD research in the field of Brand Equity and Integrated Marketing Communications at Manchester Business School. He is currently a PhD Candidate in the field of Semiotics of Brand Equity. Major publications include *Interactive Advertising: Dynamic Communication in the Information Era* (Libris Tech Publications), *Applying Structuralist Semiotics to Brand Image Research* (Amazon Press), *Towards a semiotics of brand equity: Brand coherence and communicative consistency through structuralist operations and rhetorical transformations* (Amazon Press), translation of Financial Times Publications' *Mastering Marketing*. His research interests rest with effecting inter-textual cross-fertilizations between marketing and

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semiotics discourses with an applicable managerial orientation, also informed by disciplines such as accounting and finance, brand valuation, branding, advertising effectiveness, consumer behavior, phenomenology, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, anthropology, communication theory, cultural studies.

Abstract

The theory of counterfactuals has been widely applied in economic[1] and management sciences, including marketing[2]. Among the various facets of the counterfactuals literature that have been addressed by branches of philosophy and linguistics, such as philosophy of language, logical semantics, linguistic semantics, modal fictionalism, pragmatics, I am focusing on the specific topic of possible worlds. In particular, by drawing on semantics, textual semiotics and rhetoric, I am addressing how fictive elements, embedded in a fabular world and once conceived of as counterfactual attain to be actualized in advertising discourse as part of our cultural world. By adopting Eco's fundamental premise that our world is first and foremost culturally constituted, and by recruiting rhetoric as an essential complement of a hybrid semantic/textual semiotic approach, I venture into the fantasy island of cinematic and literary fiction, only to show that this and other possible worlds are not that far apart. The managerial applications for brand genealogists, but also in terms of developing advertising texts by drawing on a

[1] See, for example, George G.S. Murphy (1969), "On counterfactual propositions", *History and Theory* Vol.9, pp.14-38.
[2] See *Psychology & Marketing*'s Special Issue (2000, Vol.17, No.4) on counterfactual thinking, focusing on psychological aspects of counterfactuals from a cognitive psychological point of view.

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combinatorial logic of properties and individuals from fictive worlds are highlighted as an addendum to the practical implications of philosophical and semiotic theory.

Keywords: textual semiotics, rhetoric, modal logic, semantics, philosophy of language

1.Introduction: Metalinguistic and possible worlds approaches to counterfactuals

"Counterfactuals are a class of conditionals, or if-then statements" (Barker 2010:109). A major issue in the counterfactuals literature is whether counterfactual propositions have truth conditionals, which may be defined in a non-circular manner. The two dominant perspectives that have offered alternative answers to the truth-conditionals of counterfactual propositions are the metalinguistic and the other possible worlds.

A fundamental principle of the metalinguistic approach is that " (A→B) is true iff [if and only if] there is an X that meets some specified condition and is such that (A&X) entails B or, equivalently, B is deducible from (A & X)" (Jackson 2006: 215).

According to Lewis, a prominent representative of the other possible worlds approach, which is of focal concern in this paper, "the central notion of a possible world semantics for counterfactuals is a relation of comparative similarity between worlds. One world is said to be closer to actuality than another if the first resembles the actual world more than the second does" (Menzies 2009). Lewis further contends that "reasoning about truth in fiction is very like counterfactual reasoning […] We depart from actuality as far as we must reach a possible world, where the counterfactual supposition comes true" (Lewis 1993: 269).

I will exemplify, in due course, how what once appeared in the context of a fabula or fictive story in a world W becomes actualized in a world W'. In *Counterfactuals* (1973: 86), Lewis defined actuality in indexical[3] terms, as follows: "'Actual' is indexical, like 'I' or 'here' or 'now': it depends for its reference on the circumstances of utterance". Bonomi and Zucchi (2003) further qualified these circumstantial factors in terms of genre conventions, in a manner akin to inter-textual theory. Complementary to *Counterfactuals* (1973), Lewis's work *Truth in Fiction* (which appeared in an updated version in *Philosophical Papers I* [1993]) is a precursor to contemporary philosophical approaches to film theory, which have imported concepts from a wide range of philosophical perspectives (Read and Goodenough 2005; Sanders 2006; Mulhall 2008), but also from psychoanalysis (Zizek 1992) and rhetoric (Blakesley 2003).

The fundamental premise that undergirds Lewis's version of the possible worlds theory, consists in the acknowledgement of the world wherein a fictive person or a state-of-affairs is embedded, such as the world of Sherlock Holmes, as a sufficient condition for formulating truthful propositions about persons or states-of-affairs. "We sometimes speak of *the* world of a fiction. What is true in the Holmes stories is what is true, as we say, "in the world of Sherlock Holmes" (Lewis 1993: 269). This core premise has been rendered in the notation of modal fictionalism as follows: "*P* iff according to PW, *P**.", where "PW" is the fiction of possible worlds, *P* is any proposition, and *P** is its possible-worlds "paraphrase" (Noel 2011).

[3] Lewis's realist account of possible worlds has been criticized by Stalnaker's mild realism perspective and by Rosen's modal fictionalist perspective (see Hale 1999), among others. For a tentative criticism of Lewis's indexicality conditional for conferring judgments about 'actuality', see Wittgenstein's (1953) argumentation about ostension and the dependence of indexicals on language-games (PI.28: "An ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case"; PI.33:"Suppose someone points to a vase and says 'Look at that marvelous blue- the shape isn't the point'), and Thomasson's (1999) modal fictionalist standpoint that posits textual conditions for indexical expressions, as referred to in this paper. Eco (1985: 176) also assumes a clear non-indexicals dependent position on actuality.

2. How to get there from here in 2 basic steps: Textual semiotic ticket-to-ride

There are significant differences and similarities between philosophy of language perspectives, logical semantics and textual semiotics, a thorough investigation of which exceeds the focus of this paper. The conceptual armory of propositional logic is not sufficiently equipped in order to account not for truth and/or assertability conditions of individual propositions, but for how the truth of a text, from a macrosemantic (Rastier 2005c) point of view, is instituted as a result of a text's peculiar logic, but also in interaction with other texts at an inter-textual level (in terms of the "megasemantics" of the corpus- Rastier 2008). Without going into detail about the plethora of theories of truth (see Walker 1999) and their subtle nuances, what is of paramount importance for the argument put forward in this paper, is the distinction between reference as agreement between a logically formulated proposition and a state-of-affairs (from a naive realist point of view) and anaphora, as the establishment of intra and inter-textual referential relationships.

As will be shown, the possibility of other possible worlds is a direct consequence of an anaphoric relationship among elements and properties that span multiple texts, as well as rhetorical operations that allow for their variable configuration. This inter-textual anaphoric relationship, from a modal fictionalist point of view, resonates in the constant dependence of a fictive character on a literary oeuvre (or other corpuses in this respect). "If a fictional character depends on a work of literature about it and a work of literature depends on some copy of it, then a fictional character depends on some copy of work of literature about it" (Thomasson 1999: 34). "It is by way of the textual foundation of a

fictive character that one may make an indexical kind of reference" (ibid: 49), thus attaining to root a fictive character in the actual world.

Eco propounded in *Lector in Fabula* (1985) an approach to how other possible worlds[4] may be conceived and realized, by putting forward a hybrid theoretical framework that combined learnings from philosophy of language, semantics, modal logic, psycholinguistics, Peircean and structuralist semiotics, narrative theory and rhetoric (among others).

The argumentative thrust put forward in *Lector in Fabula*[5] about other possible worlds is intent on mapping out how worldly structures emerge at the intersection between this world (W) and another possible world (W'). From a textual semiotic point of view, which is concerned with cultural, rather than natural phenomena, the theory of counterfactuals is appealing insofar as it raises the issue of similarity about this and other possible worlds. This issue calls for a structural matrix, whereby a homogeneity may be created between possible worlds, as will be sketched out below.

At the heart of Eco's (1985, 1986) textual semiotic approach lies the notion of encyclopedic knowledge as the ability to make inferences about possible alternative routes of a story's deployment (which concerns the 'what if…? counterpart of counterfactuals), based on accumulated knowledge, but also as the ability to make sense of fictive characters, fictive worlds and endow them with meaning. The encyclopedia hypothesis has also been endorsed in film semantic/semiotic approaches (Bordwell 1989). Inferential propositions concerning relationships among persons, events and states-of-affairs are accomplished in an encyclopedic context in the form of what Eco

[4] See Copeland (2001) for a historical evolution of possible world semantics.
[5] Eco defines fabula as the fundamental schema of narration or the semantic substratum of narratives.

(1985) calls inferential walks (or inferential tickets, in Ryle's terms- in Jackson 2006: 219) .

Encyclopedic knowledge on behalf of a reader is evinced in a phenomenological structure of foresight. The structure of foresight complements the logico-semantic approach to counterfactuals and other possible worlds, which hinges on modal logic.

Eco (1985) contends that it is difficult to proceed with a groundwork project of conditions of foresight pertaining to states of the fabula without a textual semiotic account of other possible worlds. Since the notion of other possible worlds was popularized by logical semantics (even though it was imported to the discipline by literary studies), a textual semiotic account is bound to engage critically with argumentation offered within the contours of logical semantics. In this sense, Eco (1985: 168) defines possible worlds as "a state of affairs that is expressed by a set of propositions, where for each proposition either p or –p holds". Each world is made up of individual entities that carry properties or actions. A world structure may be portrayed through a structural matrix (see Table 1) and rules of transformation among possible worlds, which will be described in terms of rhetorical operations in due course.

According to Eco, each maximal set of propositions constitutes the book of a world, in the sense of if a book on world W is a set of propositions S and proposition p is a member of the set S, then p implies and is implied in world W'. This view of a worldly structure is coupled with propositional attitudes[6], such as belief, desire, and as already argued, foresight.

[6] "Propositional attitude ascriptions – sentences such as 'Margaret believes that Tom is in Australia' – are ones whose main verb is a verb of propositional attitude. Common to such sentences is that they ascribe

3. Rhetorical operations and propositional attitudes as conditions of possibility of other worlds

From a textual semiotic point of view, Eco contends that the concept of possible worlds is not vacuous. Possible worlds are always already populated by expressive elements or, as he puts it, they are furnished. I will be exemplifying key arguments of the textual semiotic approach to possible worlds by allusion to the film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*[7] (starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett), as the argumentation progresses. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* recites the story of a fictive person (Benjamin Button) who was born with the myoskeletal system of an old man and who became younger as he aged. In the end, following this counterfactual line of reasoning to its limits, instead of dying, Benjamin Button was reborn.

Furthermore, "a possible world is a cultural construction" (Eco 1985 170), while, from a constructivist point of view of possible worlds, "even the real world of reference must be understood as a cultural construction" (ibid: 184). Eco's contention that the real world is indissociable from and is in fact conditioned by culture, is amply evinced in the consumption of films (see Holbrook and Hirschman 1992), where imaginary signifiers attain to delineate readers/viewers' background expectancies (their phenomenological foresight), by furnishing concrete frames/scripts, which function anaphorically as a regulative principle for recognizing concrete events in the "real" world as more or less probable, but also as macrostructures or global inter-textual referential structures. For example, with regard to *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, the fictive tale of a person

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psychological states (such as belief and desire) or speech acts (assertions, suggestions, and so forth)" (Stern 2006: 186; also see Richard 1999 for a critical engagement with various philosophical perspectives on propositional attitudes).

[7] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Curious_Case_of_Benjamin_Button_%28film%29

becoming younger as he grows older is abstracted to a macroproposition in the form of "It is possible in another world that is different to the one we currently inhabit that a person may become younger as he grows older", which installs a macrostructure in memory in the form of "time may be reversed". This pattern is also encountered in ordinary discourse ("What would you do if you could bring back time…?). The relationship between a macrostructure and a set of macropropositions that have been abstracted through inferential derivation rules, such as deletion, selection, generalization, construction (Van Dijk 1980) from the exposure to imaginary filmic texts, is inter-textual. Macrostructures migrate from one text to another, while crossing genres, such as between a cinematic text and an ad text. In line with Grive (1987), each text is situated in a universe of texts, which urged the author to formulate the maxim 'il n'est de texte que d'intertexte'. Inter-textuality complements encyclopedic knowledge by endowing readers with an inter-textual competency (Kristeva 1970: Eco 1985).

The rhetorical notion of anaphora and more precisely of anaphoric relationships, poses a challenge to the notion of reference in the context of the correspondence theory of truth (a naively realist approach that largely undergirds everyday discourse), where propositions are supposed to have an extra-textual referent and transcendent truth conditions (see Hale 1999), independent of context of use (Wittgenstein 1953) from a pragmatic point of view, and of propositional attitudes from a modal logical perspective.

From a modal logical point of view, as Hintikka (1969) contends, propositional attitudes (and their modal contexts) do not exhibit any failure of referentiality, but only referential multiplicity. From a textual semiotic point of view, what anaphora points to is that reference is always already a nexus of inter-textual referential relationships among

events, persons, states-of-affairs that are part and parcel of one's encyclopedic knowledge, conditioned by one's inter-textual competency.

By virtue of memory's ability to generate macropropositions and store them in the form of macrostructures, consumers have the ability to make sense of concrete scenaria offered by advertisers in variable instances of their life-world. One may not recall Benjamin Button in ten years' time, but one may be capable of recognizing a time reversal pattern in another script as possible. What was technically formulated in cognitivistic terms by Van Dijk as macropropositions, has been iterated by Eco in rhetorical terms as *topoi*. In fact, what difference may be discerned between a psychic and a rhetorical topography, if not a notional one, as already shown by Freud in the psychic structure that was put forward in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, which boils down to a vast network of metaphors and metonymies, instituted at the intersection between latent and manifest dream content?[8] (Rossolatos 2012). If a macrostructure is indistinguishable from a rhetorical topological mechanism, then memory is indistinguishable from an enthymematic network of loci communes or rhetorical topoi. "The activation of a scenario (moreover an inter-textual one) signifies recourse to a *topos"* (Eco 1985: 154). Hence, a rhetorical philosophical account of how topoi are

[8] In terms of tropical or figurative language, as Stern (2006) suggests, the bulk of philosophy of language approaches have been concerned with literal, rather than tropical propositions, that is propositions that feature rhetorical tropes and whose meaning is altered by virtue of the incidence of rhetorical tropes. Despite the significant strides that have been accomplished in the field of semantics (and pragmatics) over the past 30 years with view to accounting for figurative language, the analysis of rhetorical discourse rests primarily within the province of rhetoric. Rhetorical semiotics seeks to combine rhetorical theory with semiotic approaches and yield a coherent theoretical framework, coupled with an extensive taxonomy of rhetorical figures and rhetorical operations. Groupe μ's *Rhétorique Générale* (1970), on which I shall draw in part in this paper, constitutes a seminal work in this direction. Groupe μ's *Traité du Signe Visuel* (1992) has also exerted considerable influence on the development of rhetorical taxonomies by Mick and McQuarrie (McQuarrie 2008).

created is not necessarily reducible to cognitivism, or at least not as a dominant paradigm, but approachable via a tropological interpretive framework that is capable of demonstrating how a *mise-en-scene* is equivalent to a *mise-en-trope* (Klinkenberg 1990). Moreover, this rhetorical turn in theorizing how inter-textual discursive formations are enacted through multiple narratives points to a rhetorical dendrite structure, whereby what is more and what is less contiguous is a matter of anaphorical relations instituted through acts of mise-en-trope. The difference between viewing possible worlds from a logical-semantic and from a rhetorical textual semiotic point of view or the point of intersection between the two perspectives, consists in the latter's enriching the former with operations of semantic transformation. I will now exemplify this point with reference to the 'fictive' world of Benjamin Button.

The concerned film maintains the cycle of birth and death, albeit in reverse. It invites viewers to make sense of the story by seeking recourse to uniform encyclopedic knowledge macrostructures about the evolutionary pattern of human life, while applying a minimal probability conditional in terms of temporality. What is evoked counterfactually as an inferential walk in this film is not the truth value of a set of assertoric propositions concerning the truthfulness of discrete episodes about Buttons's life, but the notion of probability itself, and the extent to which an impossible scenario in all possible worlds, may be fleshed out in the context of fiction. As Groupe μ (1970: 143) contends, "films remind us that it is possible to permute [change the order] of elements of the real".

The crux of the argument about the textual semiotic structure of this film is that by inscribing such an extreme counterfactual scenario in an audience's memory structure,

it immediately enriches encyclopedic knowledge, by opening it up to extreme probabilities. Encyclopedic knowledge and, by implication, inter-textual competency, assume enhanced validity once inscribed in an inter-subjective trajectory,

> "Non-real objects [my note: and states-of-affairs] may be either autonomous (ideal) objects or intentional objects such as fictional or mythical characters. Purported intentional entities are admitted as intentional objects wherever we have adequate intersubjective access in referential acts, especially on the basis of a linguistic structure such as a work of literature. Intentional objects then have a peculiar 'double structure: they possess not only properties (Eigenschaften) but also an inner stock of 'characteristics' (Merkmale) which they are merely ascribed" (Smith 1978: 119).

The collective memory as set of macrostructures that is conditioned by the fabula has also been addressed by Lewis (1993: 271), who argues that assuming "by way of idealization, that the beliefs overt in the community are each possible and jointly compossible […] we can assign to the community a set of possible worlds, called the collective belief worlds of the community, comprising exactly those worlds where the overt beliefs all come true".

The ascription of belief structures is an essential aspect of the possible worlds theory, hence it is advisable to dwell on it a bit further. According to Hintikka (at least as put forward in *Models for Modalities*), the attribution of a belief structure may be summarized in the following way (Smith 1984: 323):

(i) *a* believes that *p*= in all the possible worlds compatible with what *a* believes, it is the case that *p*

This proposition is reformulated in order to encompass its truth conditionals as follows:

(ii) '*a* believes that *p*' is true in w iff for every possible world w' compatible with what the person referred to by '*a*' in w believes in w, '*p*' is true in 'w'.

And it is further reformulated with view to accounting for the contextual factor of a's belief system qua compatibility principle that conditions the existence of p in possible worlds as follows:

(iii) '*a* believes that *p*' is true in a world w iff '*p*' is true in all the possible worlds compatible with *everything a* believes in w.

Smith (1984) extended Hintikka's propositional attitudes theory by drawing on Husserlian phenomenological logic and particularly on the notions of noema[9] and horizon[10]. Without going into details about the lengthy discussions the distinction between Sinn (meaning) and reference has spawned among various philosophical circles, I shall concentrate on the interpretive merits of the employment of these Husserlian notions for further understanding how belief structures instantiate foresight about possible worlds. "The Husserlian possible-worlds theory of

[9] "Husserl introduced the technical term *noema* in ***Ideas I*** (1913) to denote the **intentional object** of conscious **experience**. In that work he describes the intentionality of experience as a ***noesis***-*noema* correlation. Whereas *noesis* refers to a **real *(reell)*** content of experience, viz., the **meaning-intention** which is directed toward an **object** in a determinate manner and with a certain positional or **thetic characteristic**, *noema* refers to the **intentional content** of the experience, its "objective" correlate, i.e., the **intentional object** or the object as intended." (Drummond 2007: 144).

[10] "An act's horizon maps out an array of possible states of affairs that fill in what is left "open" or "indeterminate" by the noema of the act itself. In this way Husserlian horizon analysis can be seen as anticipating the analysis of meaning in terms of possible world semantics, developed by Saul Kripke and Jaakko Hintikka" (Smith and Smith 1999: 25-26).

intentionality associates with each act of consciousness both a noema and a horizon of possible worlds compatible with what the Sinn of this noema prescribes" (Smith 1984: 311). In crude terms, an object is constituted by a noematic act of consciousness, which posits it in a horizon of meaning. An object is appropriated by a consciousness insofar as it enters its horizon and it is this horizon that determines (prescribes) its existence in this and any other possible world. How does a belief structure tie up with acts of consciousness? A typical example of how an act of consciousness institutes its object as a noematic structure, according to Smith, is the existence of Santa Claus. Since Santa Claus does not exist in the actual world, an act of consciousness is not directed toward some object in the actual world. However, Santa Claus does exist in various possible worlds insofar as they are compatible with what the Sinn (meaning) of a noematic act of expectation or belief prescribes. "According to a Husserlian theory, then, an act of expecting Santa Claus is directed to a merely possible object, an object that exists in various possible worlds, not in the actual world" (Smith 1984: 312). However, insofar as the belief system of *a* allows for the appropriation in the horizon of its intentionality of an object in any possible world and given that the belief system is responsible for maintaining homogeneity between the actual and possible worlds and that the object's existence is anchored on *a*'s noematic structure, then there is no difference between the existence of Santa Claus in this or in any other possible world.

> "For Husserl, a propositional act or attitude consists in a person's entertaining a noema whose Sinn is a propositional sense, whereby a state of affairs is intended. **A belief is a propositional attitude whose noema's thetic component is doxic.**

A belief consists, then, we may say, in a person's doxically entertaining a propositional sense" (Smith 1984: 348; my highlighting).

Smith (1984) combines Hintikka's possible world semantics, as described above, with Husserl's intentionality horizon in the following manner. He denotes horizon with the function *HB*, which comprises three arguments, viz. person (s), propositional sense (π) and world (w). *HB* (s, π w) is the set of worlds that make up the horizon of s's belief in w with sense π. The referent in w is the state of affairs (recalling that for Husserl the referent is reducible to an intended state-of-affairs by a noematic act), which consists in a's doxically entertaining the propositional sense *I*('*p*'). By virtue of the propositional sense, a state-of-affairs *R*('*p*', 'w') in every possible world w' may be intended. In this manner, the above-formulated proposition (iii), in the light of Husserlian phenomenological logic, is rendered as follows:

(iv) '*a* believes that *p*' is true in a world w iff in w *a* doxically entertains the propositional sense *I*('*p*'), such that, for every possible world w' in the horizon *Hb(a, I('p'*), w), there obtains in w' the state of affairs designated in w' by *I*('*p*')- so that 'p' is true in w'.

In the light of the above, the declarative proposition 'p (Benjamin is a sailor in stage X of his life)' is recognizable as truthful insofar as p is part of a culturally shared book as set of propositions S that makes up this world W. The counterfactual proposition 'p (Benjamin becomes younger as he grows older)' is counterfactual insofar as in S that allows us to make sense of W, this proposition is inherently contradictory, as it reverses the transition from p to –p, based on what is expected in S. It is a counterfactual state-of-

affairs. However, if we are cognizant of the rhetorical operation of inversion, which would suggest that the succession from p to –p may be inversed in another possible world, then the reversal of the aging pattern may be recognized as valid, as a probability inscribed in S. Thus, it is the rhetorical pattern imposed by the operation of inversion (which, for Groupe μ (1970), amounts to an operation of metalogism, that is a change of the logical value of a proposition) that enables us to confer judgments about the validity of such a proposition. "What is condemned by logicians, is of interest to rhetoric" (Groupe μ 1970: 129).

An analogue of the metalogical rhetorical operation of inversion is the rhetorical figure of anagram at a word level. An anagram functions as a metaplasm (or the change of the expected phonemic or graphemic order of a word) at the level of permutation (or the disruption of the order of phonemes and/or graphemes in a word structure), such as in the case of 'taf' instead of 'fat'. If we substitute a spoken noun phrase 'you are fat' with 'you are taf' (where the graphemic anagram 'taf' in oral discourse is homophonic with 'tough'), then we predicate of a subject a completely different attribute. They are both recognizable as valid in the context of S, but what confers recognizability in the instance of the phonemic inversion is the concurrence of the rhetorical operation of anagrammatism. This example assumes greater force if we examine it not in the context of an isolated phrase or as an instance of an isolated word, but in the context of a macrosemantic textual economy, where anagrams constitute a recurrent rhetorical strategy of semantic engineering. For example, in the macrosemantic context of a literary work, which is interspersed with fictive toponyms or a relocation of existing ones, a locative proposition is truthful not because it corresponds to extratextual referents (cf.

Groupe μ 1970: 131), but because it coheres with the semantic engineering strategy adopted in the text, which consists in dislocation.

The constant rhetorical inversions in the context of Benjamin Button confer a truth value to counterfactual propositions, as they are embedded in a rhetorical strategy of semantic reorientation, evinced in recurrent sequences of inversions among life-stages. In this context, the truthfulness of a proposition is established by a rhetorical operation in tandem with a propositional attitude, such as desire and belief. It is the belief and desire structure of a wish to be ever-young that confers truth value to the story.

Insofar as a cultural book S is made up of propositions, but also of modes of relatedness among propositions, unless these modes are addressed first and foremost *qua* propositional attitudes and rhetorical operations, the truth of a text may not be judged as such.

Eco exemplifies his textual semiotic approach to counterfactuals by allusion to the fabula of the Little Red Riding Hood. The narrative world of the Little Red Riding Hood is furnished with a limited number of individuals (a little girl, a grandmother, a wolf, a forest) and a limited number of properties. The attribution of properties to individuals in this fable follows in some respects the rules of the cultural book S (for example, the population of a forest by trees), whereas in other aspects it deviates from the rules of book S, such as in the portrayal of a talking wolf.

In the province of this narrative world, individuals adopt particular propositional attitudes, such as the belief endorsed by the little red riding hood that the wolf is her grandmother. This propositional attitude is translated by Eco, in modal logical (but also

Husserlian/phenomenological) terms, as a doxastic structure. The properties ascribed to these individuals constitute in logical-semantic terms (here Eco follows Hintikka) semantic primitives (realist/nominalist oppositions aside for the sake of the argument).

The primitive properties of riding hood that may be variably combined in different possible worlds are 'round' and 'red'. In this way, possible worlds theory is used as a modeling device (cf. Nolan 2012: 245). Based on this simple schema, the following four individuals may be constructed in different possible worlds

	Round	Red
X1	+	+
X2	+	-
X3	-	+
X4	-	-

Table 1- Co-occurrence of logical properties in four possible worlds (Eco 1985: 170)

The combinatory approach that hinges on semantic primitives is one aspect of the counterfactuals argumentation. The other major aspect concerns the very distinction between "actual" world and possible worlds and, by implication, to what extent in a cultural universe the former is conditioned by narrative possibilities opened up by fictive texts. Let us explore each one of these issues in turn.

If in the context of an experiential marketing event in a shopping mall, for example, that capitalizes on the little red riding hood fable an actor instantiates the fictive constellation of a talking wolf, he essentially attains to flesh out a narratively constructed figure. In this instance, the talking wolf becomes part of the cultural book S and hence an

instance of activation of property "talking" for an individual "wolf" in world W. Insofar as reality is a cultural construct, based on Eco's definition, and given that a brand culture has inscribed the once fictive concatenation of a talking wolf in a cultural framework, it has attained to generate a homogeneity between an initial world W and a counterfactual world W'.

4. Rapunzel for…life(world): Hair-extension *is* fabular

The conditioning of a cultural world by the fabula, as a fleshing out of a fictive persona and the capitalization of a mythic property attributed to a figure in the context of a fable, is evinced most strikingly in the example of GHD Hair Appliances' 'Twisted Fairytales' commercial series. The series featured fabular personas, such as Rapunzel and Cinderella, and the strap-line "You can do anything with your hair". The maximal proposition 'you can do anything with your hair' encapsulates counterfactuality in the brand's textual universe, by inscribing the non-existing property 'extremely long hair' in the cultural book S of this world W. Even though in this world hair as long as Rapunzel's are not existing, in the fictive world of the Rapunzel fabula such long hair is possible. This counterfactual possibility is re-inscribed in the ad text of GHD by making a concrete brand promise 'your hair can be as long as Rapunzel's'. At the same time, the actorial manifestation of Rapunzel in the context of GHD's commercial invalidates Kripke's (1972) argument that fictive names do not have a spatiotemporal referent. Furthermore, the pragmatic dimension of the fictive character of Rapunzel reinforces its existence in this world, insofar as it incites consumers to engage with the brand promise, brought forth by a fictive persona in terms of an actual purchase act. By analogy, in literary works, such as Anna Karenina, readers engage with a fictive character directly through an

emotional response to the vagaries with which the hero is laden (Holt 2008). As Glezakou (2012) stresses, based on the emotional responses of readers, fictive characters are not mere abstracta. Again, the truth-conditional of this proposition is not logical, but rhetorical. It verges on the rhetorical operation of metalogism/adjunction and the figure of hyperbole, situated in the rhetorically configured context of a parable that suggests that extremely long hair is a means to achieving various goals, from mundane, such as more efficient house-cleaning (as suggested in the Rapunzel fabula) to aspirational, such as attaining royalty status, as suggested by implication in the correlation between the differentially defining property of having extremely long hair and being the daughter of a royal couple. "A possible world is in effect what a complete novel describes" (Hintikka 1969: 154). At the same time, the referent of the individual Rapunzel is inter-textually anaphoric. It is anchored in and constantly dependent on the fabula of Rapunzel, as part of a cultural literary heritage, that is synchronically co-present (Plett 1991) with Rapunzel's inscription in the ad text, and not on a "real" (extra-textual) person, which legitimates Eco's (1985: 184) foundational premise, from a constructivist point of view, that reality is a cultural construct. In this manner, "a narrative world endows the real world with its individuals and properties" (Eco 1985: 174).

Complementary to this textual semiotic approach to counterfactuals, one should add propositional attitudes and technological means. When Rapunzel was written and circulated, it was hardly credible that someone could have such long hair. It was part of a fabula, and perhaps recognized as such. However, with the advent of the hair-extension technology, one may make an effortless conjecture that the acquisition of such long hair is not an untenable project. Hence, what once counted as a counterfactual proposition,

today is a “real” mainstream practice. As if by a prophetic foresight, Rapunzel antedated an embedded cultural practice, that of hair-extension.

The theory of counterfactuals also poses a question as regards the time-hallowed Aristotelian distinction between necessary and accidental properties. Eco (1985: 186) contends that a property is topico-sensible; the minimal structure of a world is established within the contours of a textual topic. Hence, the property ‘length’ that is predicated of Rapunzel’s hair, is essential in the context of the topic of the fable, which suggests that Rapunzel cannot have shorter hair (if her supernatural powers may still hold true; a property that was prevalent in antedating stories, such as that of Samson and in the Torah, where long-hair is matched with magical properties). Essential properties are not necessary, but gestalstic building blocks of possible world structures, as an interplay between a gestaltic[11] figure or global identity structure (see Rosenthal and Visetti 1999), and atomic properties, that are embedded in schemata. The interplay between schema[12] and properties allows for migration to possible worlds and the maintenance of homogeneity between this (W) and that (W’) world[13].

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[11] Gestaltism has also been operationalized by Branigan in order to show how films’ cognitive processing takes place, that is via both top-down and bottom-up processes. “Top-down processes often treat data as an inductive sample to be projected and tested within a variety of parallel frames of reference while bottom-up processes are highly specialized and atomistic” (1992: 37)

[12] “Cognitive psychologists define schemata as abstract, transcendental, static, top-down (rather than bottom-up) structures of the mind that organize perceptual input into coherent mental representations. Schemata are therefore finite abstract structures that interact with an infinite amount of perceptual data to form experiences. In this sense, schemata constitute the generative capacity of the mind to comprehend perceptions recurrently” (Buckland 2004: 29). Branigan (1992: 13) defines schema as “an arrangement of knowledge already possessed by a perceiver that is used to predict and classify new sensory data», The process of schematism “describes how a reader collects a series of episodes into a focused causal chain (as opposed to a "heap," "catalogue," "unfocused chain," etc.)” (ibid: 36). Branigan further outlines eight key components of a filmic narrative schema, viz. abstract, orientation, initiating event, goal, complicating action, climax/resolution, epilogue and narration (ibid: 18).

[13] This point has been partially endorsed by Lewis, who claimed that “some of the similarities most important to us involve idiosyncratic, subtle, Gestalt properties” (Lewis 1973: 95).

5. Conclusion: Implications for consumer research

The textual/constructivist nature of cultural discourses, such as advertising, and their 'real-world' implications have been repeatedly stressed in the advertising (Cook 1992) and consumer research (Hackley 2001) literatures. The modes whereby advertising textual constructivism spawns possible worlds at the inter-textual crossroads with literature and film is an under-explored research area, even more so from a hybrid logical semantic/ textual semiotic/rhetorical point of view.

Along with a demonstration of how rhetorical figures are responsible for shaping macrostructures about possible worlds and the influence propositional attitudes exert in that direction, this paper points to the benefits stemming from the possible worlds theory, in terms of a structural matrix for gauging essential and accidental properties of fictive characters and their worldly structures.

The logical implications of the argumentation that was pursued in this paper potentially urge consumer researchers to map out consumers' memory macrostructures and macropropositions in terms of inter-textual anaphoric relationships and abstract schemata, in short their encyclopedic universe. Furthermore, it invites brand genealogists (Holt 2004) to map out how brand discourses have been crystallized as concrete scripts, and as vehicles of macropropositions or depth logical relations that underpin various manifest narratives, in relationship to consumers' encyclopedic universes.

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